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ABSTRACT

The second semester of Freshman Composition at Troy State University focuses on writing about literature and writing a traditional research paper not necessarily based on literary research. One spring, the required reading was Shirley Ann Grau's novel, "The Keeper of the House." This novel, set in an unidentified Southern state, traces the history of a family from the early 1800s through the 1960s and deals with issues of racism, civil rights, and women's rights. This document outlines a multigenre approach which fused the literature and research requirements of this course. For each reading assignment of the text, students responded to a journal assignment and their response became the basis for class discussion and served as prewriting for the three required essays. In the multigenre portion of the project, students completed several in-class writing assignments to review the concept of genre: a biography poem based on one of the characters; a headline and news article based on one of the events; and a journal entry from a character's point of view. Appended are journal writing assignments, three writing projects and rubrics based on the novel, writing topics for the third assignment in the course, and the multigenre assignment and its holistic evaluation (PM)

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ED 473 947

Developing Literate Readers and Writers in the Freshman Composition Classroom

Using the Multigenre Paper to Teach the Research Process

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CS 511 790

Developing Literate Writers and Readers in the Freshman Composition Classroom

"Using the Multigenre Paper to teach the Research Process"

At TSU in the second semester of Freshman Composition we focus on two forms of writing—writing about literature and writing a traditional research paper that is not necessarily based on literary research, and it is always a challenge to integrate these two aspects of the course. Last spring, the required literature was Shirley Ann Grau's novel, *The Keeper's of the House*. As I read the novel, I sensed that it was one with which our students would identify. Grau's novel, set in an unidentified southern state, traces the history of the Howell family from the early 1800s through the 1960s and deals with issues of racism, civil rights, and women's rights.

As I searched for a way to integrate the literary discussion and writing with the research aspect of the course, I thought about a text I was using in Theory and Practice of Composition. For several years, I have been using Tom Romano's text, *Writing with Passion,* where he introduces the multigenre paper as one way, and probably a better way, of developing the concept of research. This is a required course for majors in English Language Arts Education, and several interns as well as first year teachers had experimented with the assignment in their classes. They were unanimously enthusiastic about the assignment and its positive outcomes. Their comments prompted me to decide that I too needed to try this approach to research. And I saw it as a way of bringing together the literature and the research requirements in this course.

For each reading assignment in the text, students responded to the journal assignment on the first page of your handout. Their response became the basis for class discussion and served as prewriting for the three required essays. Their first writing project called for their response to the literature. The assignment and a holistic evaluation rubric are on page 2 of your handout. The second project was an analysis of literature and required limited documentation if they used direct quotes from the novel. This assignment provided a way to introduce the concepts of paraphrase and direct quotation and to emphasize that both must be documented. Writing Project #2 and the analytic rubric are on page 3 of your handout.

The next phase of the course addressed the research requirement. I did not feel that I could completely eliminate the traditional research that was being taught in all other sections of this course. So the third assignment evolved in two parts. Students had generated a list of topics that Grau might have researched. I compiled their lists and posted the topics on the course web page. Students selected one of these topics for part 1 of their third assignment. Hear is a list of their topics (TRANSPARENCY #1). The assignment and the analytic evaluation are on page 4 of your handout.

At this point, I was finally ready to introduce the multigenre assignment that appears on page 5 and the holistic evaluation on page 6. Students completed several in-class writing assignments to review the concept of genre: a bio poem based on one of the characters, a headline and news article based on one of the events, and a journal entry from a character's point of view. Throughout the course we used teacher conferences and peer groups, but the peer groups seemed to be most helpful while they were working on the multigenre paper.

The next transparencies include examples of their work. (TRANSPARENCIES 2-5)

Overall, both the students and I had a positive learning experience.

Students were enthusiastic about trying a new approach to research and having the opportunity to do some creative writing.

They were especially happy when they realized that Part 2 of the assignment required neither additional research nor another Works Cited.

The grades on the multigenre papers were as good as or better than the grades on the traditional research.

Every student who submitted Part 1 of the assignment also submitted Part 2 although two out of 28 students submitted only Part 2.

Part 2 of the assignment reflected an understanding of voice that rarely appears in a traditional research paper where the language often sounds overly formal and syntax is often convoluted.

Overall, the various genres were handled well; they were often clever and entertaining while remaining true to the research.

Most students handled the End Notes with a thoughtfulness that suggested they understood the concept behind documentation--that they must acknowledge their source. And this is probably one of the most important outcomes.

The Keepers of the House, Journal Assignment

Complete the following journal assignment for each reading assignment in the text.

Respond to all or some of the following questions:

- What do you predict will happen next? Why?
- What is your impression of one of the characters? Explain how you came to this conclusion.
- Does any character remind you of someone you have known or heard about or read about? Explain.
- What was the most significant event in this chapter? Why is it important?
- What do you like most or least about this novel? Explain.
- What facts or details are included to establish the timeframe?
- What topics might Grau have researched before writing this novel? (Try to respond to this question for each reading assignment. Your notes will help you to select a topic for your own research.)

Because both the course instructor and other readers will be responding to your journal entries, please type them.

Make a double-entry journal of at least two pages.

Be sure to include your name and course section at the top of the page.

Writing Project #1, Reader's Response to Literature

Topic: Describe a significant and meaningful connection you made as a reader to the novel, *Keepers of the House*. The connection might be something you experienced or it could be something you observed, heard about, or read about.

Audience: TSU students enrolled in ENG 1102 who may or may not have read the same selection.

Purpose: To ensure the audience's understanding of the literary selection and its relationship to your experience. The significance of your experience, although not directly stated, should be clear to the reader.

Persona: A thoughtful reader who sees a meaningful relationship between literature and life.

Length: 800-1000 words

Evaluation, WP #1, Reader's Response to Literature

Adapts to the reader: 1 2 3 _____
- Thesis clearly stated or implied
- Effective organization and skillful use of transitions
- Appropriate voice enhances the meaning
- Provides context for reader

Informs the reader: 1 2 3 4 (x2) _____
- Informs and interests with significant and meaningful information and concepts
- Thoughtful development, fully explains, illustrates, or clarifies key ideas
- Clearly and effectively accomplishes purpose

Respects the reader: 1 2 3 4 _____
- Fluent style, demonstrates syntactic maturity
- Strong and effective command of English language
- Basically free of errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure

A	=	15	C+	=	11
A-	=	14	C	=	9-10
			C-	=	8
B	=	13			
B-	=	12	D	=	7
			D-	=	6

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Writing Project #2, Analytic Response to Literature

Topic: Analyze *The Keepers of the House* by stating and supporting your interpretation—your insight into the work.

Audience: TSU students enrolled in ENG 1102 who have read the same literary selection but may have interpreted it differently from you.

Purpose: To analyze a literary selection and to convince readers that you are offering a logical and thoughtful interpretation of the work. Some readers may agree with your interpretation while others may not. However, all readers should recognize that you have used accurate and logical evidence from the literature to support your thesis.

Persona: A thoughtful and perceptive reader and a skillful writer.

Length: 800-1000 words

Evaluation, WP #2, Analytic Response to Literature Name _____

Adapts to the reader: 1 2 3 ____
- Thesis clearly stated
- Effective organization and skillful use of transitions
- Appropriate voice enhances the meaning
- Provides context for reader

Informs the reader: 1 2 3 4 (x2) ____
- Informs and interests with significant and meaningful information and concepts
- Thoughtful development, fully explains, illustrates, or clarifies key ideas
- Clearly and effectively accomplishes purpose
- Provides logical and sufficient support

Respects the reader: 1 2 3 4 ____
- Fluent style, demonstrates syntactic maturity
- Strong and effective command of English language
- Basically free of errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure
- Follows MLA style for accurate in-text citations and Works Cited

A	=	15	C+	=	11
A-	=	14	C	=	9-10
			C-	=	8
B	=	13			
B-	=	12	D	=	7
			D-	=	6

Writing Project #3, Research Topic, Section 1

Topic: A research topic that Grau might have investigated before writing *The Keepers of the House*.

Audience: TSU students enrolled in ENG 1102 and English faculty.

Purpose: To present a thoughtful synthesis of your research so that your readers will clearly understand the analysis you have presented and/or agree with the conclusions you have drawn.

Persona: A knowledgeable researcher, one who offers rational, logical, and sufficient support for the stated thesis.

Length: 2000-2200 words
Criteria for "Works Cited:"

- Includes at least 8 references
- At least five of the eight sources are scholarly books and/or journals
- No more than three sources are newspapers or magazines
- Each citation from the WWW is a credible source—one that is maintained by a recognized and respected institution or organization.
- Each reference listed under Works Cited has an in-text citation within the essay itself.

Use MLA documentation for in-text citations and for Works Cited.

Evaluation, WP #3, Research Topic, Section 1 Name _____

Adapts to audience 1 2 3 4 (x2) ____
- Organized, coherent, focused
- Appropriate tone
- Transitions and commentary lead reader through the research

Informs audience 1 2 3 4 (x4) ____
- Clearly identifies the topic in a thesis statement
- Fully develops the introduction and the conclusion
- Offers logical support for thesis statement
- Provides sufficient support, meets minimum requirements for sources
- Limits direct quotes; incorporates paraphrase and synthesis

Respects audience 1 2 3 4 (x2) ____
- Style, language, sentence structure
- Usage and mechanics

In-text citations 1 2 3 4 ____
- Clarity and accuracy

Works Cited 1 2 3 4 ____
- Clarity and accuracy
- Meets criteria established in assignment

A+	= 39-40	B+	= 32-34	C+	= 22-24	D+	= 14
A	= 37-38	B	= 28-31	C	= 18-21	D	= 11-13
A-	= 35-36	B	= 25-27	C	= 15-17	D	= 10

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Writing Project #3, Multigenre Research, Section II

Topic: A research topic that Grau might have investigated before writing *The Keepers of the House*.

Audience: TSU students enrolled in ENG 1102 and English faculty.

Purpose: To offer the reader a unique perspective in regard to your research in the form of a multigenre paper arising from "research, experience, and imagination." It is a paper "composed of many genres and subgenres, each piece self-contained, making a point of its own, yet connected by theme or topic," a paper speaking with "many voices, not just the author's," yet coming together as a coherent whole (x-xi).

Note: This definition and the assignment of a multigenre research paper is based on the concepts presented by Tom Romano in his text, *Blending Genre, Altering Style* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2000).

Persona: A knowledgeable researcher and a creative and thoughtful author.

Length: 5-6 pages
The paper includes a minimum of five different genres.

Documentation
Each genre (each section) of the paper includes documentation in the form of End Notes.
All direct quotes are identified with an in-text citation.
All works cited in End Notes and as in-text documentation are included in the Works Cited prepared for Section I of this assignment.

Evaluation, WP #3, Research Topic, Section II **Name** _____

An **A Paper** is
Based firmly in research as well as experience and imagination
Composed of at least five different genres reflecting striking originality, creativity and development
Clearly coherent and thematic while composed of a variety of parts
Carefully documented through clear and accurate in-text citations, End Notes, and Works Cited
One that reflects skilled editing and proofreading
One with 5-6 pages of printed text with white space used only for effect

A **B Paper** is
Based firmly in research as well as experience and imagination
Composed of at least five different genres reflecting creativity and development
Coherent and thematic while composed of a variety of parts
Documented through clear and accurate in-text citations, End Notes, and Works Cited
One that reflects careful editing and proofreading
One with 5-6 pages of printed text with minimal white space

A **C Paper** is
Based somewhat on research but relying more on experience, and imagination
Composed of four or five different genres but lacking in creativity and development
Coherent while composed of a variety of parts
Documented with basic accuracy through in-text citations, End Notes, and Works Cited
One that indicates editing and proofreading with only minimal errors
One with 5-6 pages of printed text supplemented with excessive white space

A **D Paper** is
Based mainly on experience and imagination with little evidence of research
Composed of four or five different genres, but lacking appropriate development
Composed of a variety of parts but lacking in coherency
Documented but lacking in clarity and accuracy
One that indicates carelessness or lack of knowledge in editing and proofreading
One with 5-6 pages of printed text filled with excessive white space

An **F** Paper is one that fails to meet the basic and minimum requirements identified in the assignment.

What topics might Grau have investigated before writing *The Keepers of the House*?

Alabama history:
- **Civil rights movement**
- **Integration of schools**
- **Politics of segregation**
- **Medicine and segregation**

War of 1812 and the Battle of New Orleans
Andrew Jackson and the Freejacks
The Depression Era: "Drifters," prohibition, bootleggers, stills
Pearl Harbor
Korean War
Polio epidemic

The South during the first half of the 20th century:
- **Hunting customs and rituals**
- **Wedding customs and rituals**
- **Funeral customs and rituals**
- **Cemeteries**
- **Changes in Atlanta**
- **Agricultural practices**
- **Superstitions**
- **Folktales**
- **Changes in Southern economy**
- **Travel by train**
- **The preacher's role in society**
- **Childbirth**

The Delta area
- **Plant life and animals**
- **Geography**
- **Seasonal floods**
- **Gristmills**
- **Cotton crop and the boll weevil**
- **Southern names**
- **Anthrax**

THESIS: Lack of proper medical care and society's view of women fostered practices that contributed to the difficult birth experiences and high mortality rates of nineteenth century women.

Childbirth in the Nineteenth Century: A Personal Story

This paper is set up to portray realistically what the experience of pregnancy and childbirth might have been like for a nineteenth century woman. The central character is a 20 year-old Elizabeth Guttman who discovers she is pregnant and struggles to deal with this strange and frightening experience. Her husband Charles, her friend Mary Peters, and Doctor MacDougal are the other characters in the paper that aid and support Elizabeth throughout her ordeal.

JOURNAL ENTRY: September 17, 1830

My spirits are high today because I am anticipating the arrival of a most wonderful gift toward the summertime. I have concluded, based on my recent physical disposition, that I am carrying my first little one and that in due time I will be able to present my husband Charles with a healthy child! The thought of doing so eases my mind about the suffering that is sure to come. Only the fate of poor Eliza Millwood causes me to be apprehensive about the future. Heaven forbid that I should suffer as she did and never live to see the precious creature that I brought into the world! But God willing, he shall give me strength and all will be well. I have not told my Charles yet, but oh how excited he shall be! I hope for a healthy boy, but whatever God gives me, I will be thankful for.

PIECE #1: JOURNAL ENTRY: September 17, 1830

This piece was inspired by the real-life accounts of nineteenth century women in *Motherhood in the Old South*. I used the accounts to determine the attitudes, fears and concerns of women of the period about pregnancy and childbirth.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON CONVERSATION

Mary: Well, Elizabeth my darling, what is it that you desired to tell me? You have talked for some time, but I have not heard it yet.

Elizabeth: (laughing) Then I shall get right to it Mary. (Leans in closer) I am expecting!

Mary: (gasps) Elizabeth! Oh, I am so happy! Wonderful, wonderful indeed! My dear Beth, I wish you all the blessing that God will bestow.

Elizabeth: (smiling) Thank you Mary (Pauses) Mary, I must admit that the thought uneases me a bit. I just cannot seem to put the fate of Eliza Millwood from my mind.

Mary: How you feel is only natural Elizabeth. But you must try not to worry. Remember of how it will affect the child in your womb. Worrying will do nothing but harm the baby and you will be none the better for tormenting your mind. Also, recall that Eliza was a frail sickly woman in no condition to have a good delivery. You are stronger and healthier than she; her fate will not be yours by God's grace.

Elizabeth: (sighs) You are right Mary. I will be thankful from now on and will not think on unpleasant things.

Mary: You have written your mother, I suppose and told her of the good news?

Elizabeth: I have. As soon as I was sure of my condition I wrote her. She is coming in May to stay with me until I deliver and recover.

Mary: (sighs) Oh Beth, you are blessed in so many ways. You are expecting in your first year of marriage and I have born the reproach of being barren several years now.

Elizabeth: God is still able Mary. Besides, you may not be so envious of my condition when you see what I may endure.

Mary: I would suffer anything to give my loving husband the child he deserves and has long awaited.

Elizabeth: (sighs) I wouldn't be so certain if I were you Mary. I wouldn't be so certain.

PIECE #2: TUESDAY AFTERNOON CONVERSATION

The idea for this piece came from the book *Brought to Bed.* A chapter in the book entitled "Only a Woman can Know" talked about how women had no one but each other to express their feelings to about the sensitive subject of childbirth. Women formed tight knit groups that functioned as support systems. I tried to express the closeness of those women in piece #2.

MARY'S LOG

Elizabeth has finally been delivered of a baby boy after much suffering. She is in the weakest physical state possible. I have been by her bedside for the past two days. She has been bled, cut, subjected to strange and horrible therapies other atrocities I dare not name. And the blood she has lost! How I pity my dear friend. God, give her strength to make it through this night. I believe that if she can pull through this night, she will live. I will be needed to assist and lend a helping hand so I must try to get a little sleep now.

EPITAPH

In Loving Memory of Elizabeth Patterson
Who departed this life June 22, 1831 age
21 years 10 months and 7 days
And her infant babe who lies beside her.

PIECE #6: MARY'S LOG

I drew on the books *Motherhood in the Old South, Brought to Bed, The History of Childbirth* and *The American Way of Birth* for information and details concerning the childbirth experience. I took the research from each of these books and tied it together to create Mary's Log.

PIECE #8: EPITAPH

I got the idea for this piece from *Brought to Bed.* It gave examples of the many gravestones created for young mothers who had died during or after childbirth, and a few epitaphs were reprinted from these gravestones. I used these to create my own.

THESIS: Although the vaccine developed during the 1950s polio epidemic was effective, it may pose risks that can be harmful and, therefore, should not be government mandated.

POLIO VACCINE

Polio is a disease which

Offers individuals

Life-long body deformities due to risks associated with

Injected and

Oral

Vaccines that are

Administered to

Children across America

Consequently, crippling and

Inflicting

Neurological disorders that lead parents and researchers to the controversial

issue of the

Effectiveness and safety of vaccines.

Piece #1; Polio Vaccine
This piece was inspired by research from Bollenbach's article, "Polio War and Vaccine Strategy," and Henderson, Okonek, and Morganstein's "Definition of Polio Vaccines." I decided to spell out polio vaccine vertically and just went from there. I thought it would add a little more to the effect of the poem by doing this.

Andalusia Star News April 4, 1984

Home Town Girl's Fifteen Minutes of Fame

Andalusia native, Mary Ellen Spears, arrived home yesterday after attending an April 1st news conference in Washington dealing with the adverse effects of the polio vaccine. Spears, one of several other polio victims, was selected to speak at the conference. Spears was diagnosed with polio twenty-six years ago after receiving the Oral Polio Vaccine. At the conference, Spears stated that no vaccine is one hundred percent effective without risks. Although her parents were not informed that there was a slight risk of contracting the very disease the vaccine was meant to prevent, she still feels that they would have taken that chance. Today she believes that, although she has polio, the vaccine's benefits far outweigh the risks. Spears added that the oral polio vaccine provides protection against the disease and enables the individual to eliminate antibodies through bodily wastes resulting in population protection. She ended her discussion by saying that she feels that the vaccine should be a personal choice and not government mandated. She stated that parents should become well informed about the benefits and risks of any vaccination before deciding whether or not to vaccinate.

Piece #3: Home Town Girl's Fifteen Minutes of Fame
This piece deals with the choices that one family made although they did not know the risks associated with the polio vaccine. I gathered research from Abramson and Pickering in *JAMA* and combined it with a little imagination to create the article.

THESIS: Instead of reducing crime, prison populations, tax burdens, and other social problems, prohibition resulted in an increase of all these issues that started almost immediately following the enactment of prohibitory laws.

Bootleggers get the "Boot" to Jail

Three more bootleggers arrived at the county jail in custody of Holmes County Police Officers after confiscation of illegal beverages.

Officers Steven Lee and Bobby Gardner arrested William Majors, Thomas Majors, and Billy Stevens Tuesday afternoon following the discovery of two large whiskey distilleries in Grishmill Swamp.

These men had been purchasing corn at 25 cents per bushel from the local farmers market to illegally produce spirits. One bushel of corn yielded two and a half gallons of whiskey that these men sold for approximately $1.25 or more.

Sources say that Sellers was released on bail but the Majors brothers remain in custody for further investigation since the operation was located on their land. Witnesses guess that the operation could have been producing and selling spirits for the past 10 to 12 months.

According to officers these men have been under observation for some time now. "These men are just the first of many observations that we feel will result in numerous arrests in the near future," stated Sheriff Whit Rogers. "The police department intends to shut down all manufacturing and trafficking of alcohol."

"Bootleggers get the 'Boot' to Jail" was inspired by stories I have heard from elder family members that were alive during prohibition. I also cited information from *The Alcoholic Republic* by W. J. Rorabaugh.

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